



GIVE THEM PROCESSING TIME

A pause now leads to better learning later.



THE IDEA

EAL learners often need more time to process language, make meaning and formulate their ideas.

A short pause gives students time to think, recall, organise and find the right words, leading to more confident and higher quality responses.

Processing time is not silence – it's thinking time. It helps all learners, not just EAL students.



IN THE CLASSROOM

Build in purposeful wait time after asking a question. Resist the urge to repeat or rephrase too quickly.

Use strategies like:

- count to 5 or 10
- think-pair-share
- silent thinking time
- give thinking prompts
- use a visual to focus ideas

Be comfortable with silence – it's a sign of a thoughtful classroom.

THE 3 STEPS

1



PAUSE

Ask and wait.

Pose the question.
Then be quiet.
Give at least 5–10 seconds of thinking time.
Avoid calling on the first hand.

"Take a moment to think ..."

"You don't need to speak yet ..."

"Write your thoughts or just think ..."

2



PROCESS

Let them process.

Students think, make connections and organise their ideas.
They might jot notes, look at a visual or use a partner to rehearse.
This helps them find the language they need.

"Think about ..."

"You could start by ..."

"Talk it through with your partner ..."

3



RESPOND

Stronger answers.

After processing time, students share their ideas in speaking or writing.
Responses are fuller, more accurate and more confident.
A pause leads to deeper thinking and better learning.

"I think ... because ..."

"Building on that ..."

"My answer is ..."



WHY IT WORKS

- Reduces anxiety and pressure.
- Supports deeper processing and understanding.
- Leads to longer, more accurate and more confident responses.
- Builds inclusion and participation for all learners.



EAL UPGRADE

- Be explicit about thinking time.
- Use visual prompts or key words on the board.
- Allow students to think, talk or jot before responding.
- Encourage the use of home language in the thinking stage.
- Model how to take thinking time and plan an answer.



TRY IT TOMORROW

- Choose one question in your next lesson.
- Ask the question and give 10 seconds of silence.
- Invite students to jot or discuss with a partner.
- Then take responses.
- Compare the quality and confidence of answers.



TEACHER LANGUAGE

"Take your time."
"It's okay to think."
"You can jot your ideas first."
"Talk to a partner."
"I'll come back to you in a moment."
"Good ideas take time."
"A short pause can lead to a great answer."